The New Year, My Ohio Series and the Hero’s Journey

written by Holly
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The Crash

The new year is just an arbitrary date – not a real thing, not something that can change your life. If you’re in a Western European-derived country, then you use the Western calendar. In which Pope Gregory XIII built a new calendar to update the Julian calendar (which had an issue with equinoxes), and western Europe (and by extension, the US) adopted the calendar…

But the truth is that years and months and days and hours and minutes are arbitrary measurements, best guesses by a multitude of civilizations all over the world at marking time using different methods, usually outside the measurement of the speed of atomic decay of hydrogen or cesium atoms.

January 1st is a roll of the dice. The first day of the “new year” could be on the first day of spring, the summer equinox, the winter equinox, the date of the birth of the favorite person of the guy with enough power to memorialize that date for the life of that civilization…

Point is, the day itself…? Just. Doesn’t. Matter.

It’s one more wake-up call in a lifetime that you hope will be long, and that you hope will be good, and meaningful, and full of joy and excitement (of the right kind).

But humans in general seem to like to take stock. To look back

at where they've been, to look forward to where they might want to go… and to see where they are.

That taking stock, for me, did not happen on December 31st, or on January 1st this year.

It happened when, after MONTHS on a revision that would in most cases would have just take me a couple of weeks, on Monday, January 6th, I crashed the novel *Dead Man's Party* into a ten-ton block of iron at about a thousand miles per hour.

It happened I came face to face with the true nature of the villain I'd built, and realized that day that while he was perfect for the role he held, and absolutely true and right for the story, *I could not write him*. And I could not remove him – he was perfect for the role, perfect for the book. He was simply the wrong character for me. I could not write him and find any joy in the writing.

It was a true dark night of the soul, and I was stunned by my vehement reaction to the story *Dead Man's Party* was becoming.

I stalled, froze, locked up.

Matt kicked me out of that locked-up, shut-down state by asking me, "Why are you doing this to yourself? The Ohio Novel has been sitting on your hard drive for six months? Why don't you work on that?"

And my daughter Becca said, "Why don't you take a think week? Figure out what you need to do?"

The Think Week

I took a Bill-Gates-style Think Week, (in-house, no vacation) in which my theme was simply to define what I wanted my writing career to be. The last decade, it has been heavily non-fiction, but last year I wrote three first-draft novels while also writing the massive How to Write a Novel class, and

realized that I am burned all the hell out on nonfiction, and that I want to take a run at making my fiction my full-time job again, this time as an indie, and to use THAT experience to build the support of my non-fiction classes around the fact that I'm a full-time pro **indie** fiction writer.

Walk the indie walk, in other words, and not have the majority of my credibility come from the thirty-some commercially published novels – because going commercial is simply not the best choice for most novelists.

And while I took my think week, and decided to pass *Dead Man's Party* on to my son Mark, I revised my first Ohio novel. Start to finish, read-through AND write-in. In three days. My previous personal best for an author's revision (as opposed to an editor's request for revisions, which usually takes a week, best case) is about two weeks. And that was grinding.

I did not experience a single moment of grinding on this, a single spot where I didn't know what to fix or how to fix it. And I loved the book on the read through, and loved it even more on the write in.

Three days is by far is the fastest I have EVER revised a full-length novel.

Doing that revision, I realized a couple of things.

The Ohio Series is what I want to be writing through at least five books.

To do them well, I need to do them exclusively, and stay deeply embedded in that world.

So between Monday, January 13th and today, I have been building the overall themes of the Ohio Series (it won't be called that when it goes on sale, but it's going to have to be Amazon exclusive when it launches, and I want to do either a three-book or five-book monthly release of the novels, which

means I’m throwing everything I have into this.

The Ohio Series

I built a Hero’s Journey type-in revision outline for the first Ohio novel, and Hero’s Journey outlines for the other four books in the series – books 3 through 5 this morning.

I’ll now transfer the Book 1 HJO (Hero’s Journey Outline) to my Scrivener chapter notes, and do the type-in revision from the manuscript. Put the Book 2 HJO into the notes of the next novel manuscript, and start writing that one. Revise.

Write the third. Decide if the end of the midpoint novel of the series is a good place to put everything that I have on sale… OR wait until I have all five done.

I’ll be updating *How to Revise Your Novel* during this process, and will no doubt have some nice examples of my accelerated process to bring to the class update… but that’s going to have to be in small steps, and will not be done at the blinding one-lesson-per-week pace I maintained while building of *How to Write a Novel.*

At this point, I revert to being a novelist first. And that means fiction first, and lots of it. My first two hours of the morning, Monday through Thursday. More if I can streamline my schedule.

So… to sum up…

Things are changing. And I’m glad.

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